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Official Records

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Thursday, 14 December 1995, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral ..... (Portugal)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Agenda item 3 *(continued)*

Credentials of representatives to the fiftieth session of the General Assembly

(b) Second report of the Credentials Committee (A/50/559/Add.1)

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): The draft resolution recommended by the Credentials Committee in paragraph 10 of its second report reads as follows:

"*The General Assembly*,

Having considered the second report of the Credentials Committee and the recommendation contained therein,

Approves the second report of the Credentials Committee."

We shall now take action on the draft resolution recommended by the Credentials Committee in paragraph 10 of its second report (A/50/559/Add.1).

The Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 50/4 B).

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 3.

Agenda item 105 *(continued)*

Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

Note by the Secretary-General (A/50/728)

Draft resolution (A/50/728)

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): Members will recall that the Assembly concluded on 31 October the debate marking the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year.

The Assembly has before it a note by the Secretary-General circulated in document A/50/728, which contains a draft resolution entitled "World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond".

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution.

95-87027 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 50/81).

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I shall now call on those representatives who wish to explain their positions on the resolution just adopted. May I remind delegations that explanations of vote or position are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Pace (Malta): In joining consensus on the final draft of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, Malta would like to state that in the implementation of such a Programme, it reaffirms and recognizes the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents and legal guardians to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the child's exercise of the rights recognized in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The delegation of Malta would also like to state that it reserves its position on the use of the term "reproductive health" as used in different parts of this Programme of Action and on related services and needs. The interpretation given by Malta is consistent with its national legislation, which considers the termination of pregnancy through induced abortion as illegal.

Malta further reaffirms its reservations on the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women, as contained in the respective reports of these conferences.

My delegation would like to have this position reflected in the records of this meeting and in the final report.

Mr. Hamida (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My country has joined the consensus on the final draft of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. However, we should like here to voice our reservations on paragraphs 56, 57 and 58, which refer to providing reproductive health services for adolescents. Such services, in our view, should be provided only under the supervision of parents, as agreed at previous world conferences.

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Having joined the consensus on the document we have just adopted, the delegation of the Government of the Republic of Argentina wishes to state the following clarifications and reservations.

First, the Republic of Argentina cannot accept the inclusion of abortion under the concept of reproductive health, either as a service or as a fertility-control method. This reservation, which is based on the right to life, applies to all the references that reflect this way of thinking.

Secondly, the Republic of Argentina has reservations as regards the document's references to reproductive health services for youth, because these disregard the principle of primary responsibility of parents.

Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran): I wish to register the reservations of the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran as follows.

My delegation decided to join the consensus adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. However, we believe that sexual education, as well as information and services available to adolescents in this regard, as referred to in paragraphs 8 (g), 56, 57 and 58 of the Programme of Action, can be productive only if the material is appropriate and if such education is provided by the parents and aimed at preventing moral deviation and physiological disease.

Miss Wahbi (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Sudan joined the consensus on the final draft of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond because of our firm belief in the importance of the role youth has to play. However, the delegation of Sudan feels that any real consensus that would make it possible to implement the Programme has to be built on respect for the concerns of States that arise from their cultures, creeds, religions, traditions and customs as well as respect for the structure of every society.

Our delegation believes that the Programme has many positive aspects which, undoubtedly, will help youth to play an active and effective role in the lives of their societies. At the same time, however, the Programme ignores certain societies and does not take their values and traditions into account. That is the reason why we should like to put on record our reservations with regard to paragraphs 8 (g), 49, 56, 57 and 58.

Those reservations on the above paragraphs stem from the fact that we view them against the backdrop of the necessary respect for the values and traditions of different societies. We should like our reservations to be officially reflected in the records and in the report.

Mr. Hamdan (Lebanon) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The delegation of Lebanon, in joining the consensus on the final draft of the World Programme of Action for Youth, did so because we view the development and encouragement of youth as one of the vital factors of development in our societies. However, we should like to put on record Lebanon's reservations with regard to the contents of some of the paragraphs of the Programme, particularly paragraphs 8 (g), 49, 56, 57 and 58, concerning the sexual health, reproductive health and related services for adolescents. We believe that any activity in this particular area should definitely be under the supervision and guidance of parents.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): We have just heard the last speaker in explanation of position.

We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 105.

Agenda item 46

Assistance in mine clearance

(a) Report of the Secretary-General (A/50/408)

(b) Draft resolution (A/50/L.57)

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the representative of Spain to introduce draft resolution A/50/L.57.

Mr. Martínez Salazar (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Building upon the initiative taken three years ago by the European Union, which resulted in the adoption without a vote of resolutions 48/7 and 49/215, I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/50/L.57, on behalf of the following 58 sponsors: Afghanistan, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Mongolia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Singapore, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Togo, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Uruguay.

I wish to thank sincerely all the delegations that have given their support to the draft resolution and contributed constructively to its drafting, the members of the Secretariat and especially the Department of Political Affairs.

The sponsors are submitting a draft resolution on this item again this year because its adoption is all the more necessary today, when the United Nations is commemorating its fiftieth anniversary.

The European Union is fully aware of the human tragedy caused today by the indiscriminate use of certain weapons, and particularly by the approximately 100 million land-mines in more than 60 countries of the world. Their terrible consequences on civilian populations and their devastating impact on the prospects for development and economic reconstruction in the regions affected have led us to take this urgent and decisive action.

Therefore, the European Union is deeply satisfied that so many Governments and international organizations have reacted spontaneously to the human suffering generated by the indiscriminate use of mines, often in internal conflicts.

Proof of our deep and sustained concern on this issue is the European Union decision of 12 May 1995 to implement joint action comprising three elements: first, a common moratorium on the export of anti-personnel land-mines, responding to the call for the establishment of moratoriums on the export of land-mines contained in the relevant resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly; secondly, preparation for and active participation in the Review Conference of the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, with a view to strengthening its Protocol II; thirdly, the contribution of the European Union to the international efforts for mine clearance. The International Meeting on Mine Clearance, held last 5-7 July, constituted the most recent step taken in this direction, and the European Union, as well as its member States, actively contributed to it, both financially and technically. The European

Union's contribution of 3 million ECUs — approximately $4 million — to the Trust Fund and the substantial national contributions of its Member States are proof of our commitment.

In addition, during the past three years the European Commission has spent some $30 million on mine-clearance projects, usually as part of its broader development, rehabilitation and humanitarian-aid programmes. In implementing its programmes, the European Commission works very closely in many parts of the world with the relevant United Nations agencies. The European Commission's Joint Research Centre at Ispra, Italy, is engaged in research on mine detection and has the potential to become a focal point in the development of new mine-detection technologies.

Let me briefly outline the main elements of the draft resolution.

The second, third and fourth preambular paragraphs stress the General Assembly's deep concern about the tremendous humanitarian problem caused by the constant increase in the total number of land-mines, especially with regard to children. As the Secretary-General points out in his report, the world-wide problem of land-mines has continued to grow in the past year, with the number of new mines laid exceeding the number removed through the efforts of the United Nations and other organizations.

The fifth preambular paragraph underlines the importance of establishing records of the location of mines, in accordance with international law, so that, after the conflicts, the records can be used to remove the mines safely and economically.

The seventh and eighth preambular paragraphs insist on the need for broad coordination of international research efforts to improve capacity in mine clearance. This is particularly necessary given the limitations of current mine-clearance techniques, in which manual methods are still, in most circumstances, the only reliable means of clearing mines.

The ninth preambular paragraph recalls resolution 50/74, adopted without a vote two days ago, which endorses the efforts of the States parties to the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons to strengthen the prohibitions and restrictions of Protocol II to that Convention. The resolution also makes an urgent appeal to all States to become parties to the Convention as soon as possible.

In the tenth preambular paragraph, the General Assembly also recalls its resolutions 48/75 K, 49/75 D and 50/70 O, in which the Assembly calls for a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel land-mines and welcomes the increasing number of moratoriums adopted by States.

In the operative part of the draft resolution, the General Assembly expresses its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his excellent report and to Member States and international organizations for their participation in the special Meeting on Mine Clearance and for their financial contributions to the Trust Fund established by the Secretary-General. As more money is still needed, paragraph 4 appeals again for additional contributions.

We must welcome and encourage the efforts of the United Nations, particularly the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. The General Assembly must encourage not only the implementation of comprehensive mine-action programmes but also the establishment of national mine-clearance capacities by afflicted countries, with the assistance of the international community, as expressed in paragraph 2.

The importance of promoting and facilitating international research to improve mine-clearance methods is emphasized in paragraph 8, which calls for the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to be designated as the focal point for information on international research on de-mining.

Paragraphs 10 and 11 reiterate the call upon Member States to provide information and technical and material assistance to mine-afflicted countries for the location, removal or destruction of mines in minefields. The provision of technological assistance and the promotion of scientific research and development in the area of humanitarian mine-clearance techniques, to enhance the effectiveness of mine-clearance activities, are also addressed.

Finally, paragraph 12 requests the Secretary-General to submit a new, comprehensive report on the progress achieved in the recent years, with special attention to the operation of the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance.

Allow me to express the hope of all the sponsors that this draft resolution will be adopted without a vote.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I should like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate on this item be closed today at 12 noon.

It was so decided.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I therefore request those representatives wishing to participate in the debate to inscribe their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible.

Mr. Bjørn Lian (Norway): I wish, first of all, to thank the Secretary-General for the thorough and informative report on assistance in mine clearance.

The Norwegian Government is gravely concerned at the increasing use of anti-personnel land-mines in conflict areas. The primary victims are unarmed civilians, particularly children. Land-mines also have a devastating impact on societies at large by making entire areas of land inaccessible for decades, preventing refugees and internally displaced persons from returning home and hindering social and economic development.

In order to address these problems, the Norwegian Government proposed a seven-step action plan at the International Meeting on Mine Clearance held in Geneva in July this year. Allow me to draw the Assembly's attention to the main points in this action plan.

First, as is emphasized in the Secretary-General's report, we should work towards a total ban on the production, stockpiling, trading and use of anti-personnel land mines. We seek, as a first step, the broadest possible support for a permanent moratorium on such mines. Let me add that Norway neither produces nor exports any anti-personnel land-mines or any of their components.

Secondly, the international de-mining capacity should be radically increased, primarily by enhancing permanent local de-mining capabilities. Local expertise should be developed for mine-awareness programmes and detection and clearance activities. Norway has so far spent more than $20 million on mine clearing and on the training of local de-mining personnel and mine-awareness instructors around the world, through Norwegian People's Aid and other organizations, and we will allocate even more in the years to come.

Thirdly, far more resources are allocated for the production of new weapons than to remedy the damage they cause. This being the case, we must now concentrate on developing improved de-mining technology. Let me mention in this connection that Norway has great expectations of a new de-mining vehicle — a super strong roller connected to an army tank. The vehicle, invented by the Norwegian company Tonstad and developed with Swedish Bofors, is expected to be able to dramatically speed up the clearing of open fields, either by detonating the mines or by chewing them into harmless pieces. We look forward to undertaking pilot projects with the United Nations in 1996 to test this machine in mine-prone areas.

Fourthly, we should strengthen the ability of the United Nations to initiate and coordinate de-mining activities worldwide. The United Nations should also mobilize resources for de-mining activities.

Norway welcomes, in this connection, the establishment of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance, and we have made a cash contribution of NKr 8 million, which is approximately $1.2 million, in support of the Fund. Norway is also ready to contribute expert personnel to the stand-by capacity of the United Nations mine-action assistance programmes through the Norwegian Emergency Preparedness Systems. We are also ready to help out explanatory missions and to provide personnel and resources to start up United Nations mine-clearance and mine-awareness programmes.

Fifthly, my Government is deeply disappointed that we did not achieve an agreement on resolving the land-mine Protocol during the Review Conference on the United Nations 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. We are, however, ready to resume work in Geneva in January and April 1996 with a view to obtaining substantial improvements in this Protocol. It cannot be accepted that humanitarian concerns should always give way to military requirements.

In this context, I would like to take the opportunity to urge all countries to adhere to the 1980 Convention. No strengthening of the land-mine Protocol will be effective unless adherence to it becomes universal.

Sixthly, an effective verification mechanism should be established to monitor the extent to which parties comply with the provisions of the 1980 Convention as well as the humanitarian law of armed conflict — the 1949 Geneva Conventions. The Secretary-General should be granted the authority to initiate investigations and the right to record evidence in those cases where there is a

suspicion of a breach of the provisions of these Conventions. Investigations should be implemented immediately upon the submission of such a request from even a minority of States.

My seventh and perhaps most important point is this: We now need an international register under the auspices of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, based on information gained from clearing of mines and booby-traps used in contravention of basic humanitarian principles and international law. Such a register should include information on procedures and country of origin. I believe that such an initiative could be of vital importance in solving one of the most horrifying legacies of war and conflict: the existence of mine-infested land.

Mr. Fedotov (Russian Federation)(*interpretation from Russian*): The Russian Federation attaches great importance to the mobilization of mine-clearance efforts by the international community as well as efforts to overcome the consequences of the mine threat to post-conflict reconstruction and social and economic development.

The Russian Federation is one of the States most affected by the land-mine threat. For us the issues it raises are pressing. Over 100,000 explosive devices are discovered and destroyed annually in the territory of the Russian Federation, in operations whose direct costs amount to more than $25 million yearly. Russians understand perfectly well the pain and suffering of those people in numerous locations all over the world who become hostages and fall victims to the mine threat. Despite the efforts made, thousands of our citizens have fallen victims to the "mine legacy" of the Second World War in times of peace.

Russia energetically supports the efforts of the international community to impose severe restrictions on the use of mines, which are inhumane weapons. The Russian humanitarian initiative put forward by President Boris Yeltsin in August 1993 falls within the context of these efforts. The adoption by the Russian Federation late last year of a three-year moratorium on exports of anti-personnel mines was a practical step towards the implementation of that initiative, as well as of the decisions of the 1993 Geneva Conference on the protection of victims of war. Such measures, now taken by a number of States, will make it possible to substantially restrict the proliferation of this kind of weapon, which has indiscriminate effects and to reinforce the effective norms of humanitarian law relating to the use of land-mines.

The 1980 Geneva Convention on inhumane weapons constitutes a good basis for further progress towards developing mechanisms of effective international control regarding issues of prohibition of and restrictions on the use of specific land-mine types. Russia welcomes the adoption, at the Conference in Vienna this fall, of the new fourth Protocol, which bans the use of blinding laser weapons. We regard as important the progress made on further staged steps toward the establishment of a universal international regime in the area of the manufacture and use of land-mines, as well as their transfer.

The Russian Federation also believes it important to build up the efforts of the international community with a view to increasing employment of the United Nations capacity in mine clearance. The International Meeting on Mine Clearance, held under the auspices of the United Nations in Geneva last July, was a notable event regarding countering the mine threat. The very fact of the participation in it of about a hundred States and over 60 international organizations clearly shows that the issue is of a genuinely global scale. Appropriate measures and resources are now needed. Without them, neither fully-fledged United Nations peace-keeping operations nor post-conflict economic reconstruction, nor efficient humanitarian assistance, nor a return of refugees, is possible. The United Nations can and must play a coordinating role in this effort.

We welcome the establishment by the United Nations Secretary-General of the Voluntary Trust Fund, and hope that it will play a key role in financing programs for mine-clearance training and assistance for mine-clearance operations. Its capacities can be used for the purpose of medical and social aid to victims of land-mines. It would also be useful to envisage the financing of programmes of scientific research for mine-clearance and training of experts, as well as for raising the awareness of the population in order to reduce the mine threat.

We welcome the idea of establishing a stand-by capacity, which would swiftly and efficiently respond to the mine threat, in the form of a register of possible contributions in kind from donor States. For its part, Russia has produced its candidates to be included in the register.

We also support strengthening the coordinating role of the United Nations in technical assistance for mine-clearance and establishing national mine-clearance

capacities through fruitful cooperation between the United Nations, regional organizations and the United Nations Member States. In this regard, of key importance are efforts by the States themselves to create efficient national mine-clearance capacity, since the main responsibility for practical measures in this field lies with them.

In this connection, we would like to inform the Assembly that work is under way in the Russian Federation on completing a federal special-purpose programme for mine-clearance, based on respective regional programmes in areas affected by the mine problem. For us, issues of cooperation with the United Nations, of exchange of experiences and of technical assistance are of great practical significance.

Though Russia itself is in need of financial assistance to carry out its own programmes of mine clearance, it is ready to participate in the provision of land-mine clearance assistance to interested countries on a multilateral or bilateral basis, primarily in training, in detection and deactivation of Soviet-made land-mines and provision of mine-clearance equipment.

We have accumulated considerable scientific, technological and industrial potential in developing detection and de-mining equipment which allows us to take part in international programmes for the development and manufacture of promising equipment and technologies in this field.

We would like to dwell particularly on the issue of the connection between United Nations peace-keeping operations and mine clearance. We believe it would be justifiable to raise the issue of introducing provisions on mine clearance into United Nations operations mandates. For instance, in the course of peace-keeping operations in the territories of the Commonwealth of Independent States we simultaneously dealt with complex and expensive tasks of clearing mines both locally and at various installations. We hope this important aspect will also be taken into account while planning future peace-keeping operations to be carried out by the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in the territories of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

I should like to take this opportunity to add my voice to the repeated appeals of the Security Council urging Member States to make contributions to the voluntary funds for Georgia and Tajikistan established by the Secretary-General in accordance with Security Council resolutions 937 (1994) and 968 (1994). These funds could also be used to finance mine-clearance programmes in those countries.

The Russian delegation, which has joined in sponsoring the draft resolution introduced by Spain, also expresses its hope that it will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Hamdan (Lebanon) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: The Lebanese delegation considers the question under discussion to be one of the important and urgent issues before the international community.

The problem of mines left behind in the territories of a number of States is not only a humanitarian one but also a problem that creates a genuine obstacle in the way of economic development in such States. According to the statistics of the International Red Cross, there are between 85 and 100 million mines that have been left behind in 62 countries, including Lebanon. Those buried mines kill some 800 people every month.

This, without a doubt, is an extremely grave problem. Indeed its gravity has led the Secretary-General to state, in his Agenda for Peace, that peace-building efforts in post-conflict situations, be they national or international, must deal with the serious problem of remaining mines. Furthermore, the Secretary-General considered that mine clearance should be underscored in peace-keeping mandates as it constitutes a vital task in the context of peace-building activities.

This important statement by the Secretary-General in the Agenda for Peace was echoed in a statement by the President of the Security Council on 26 February 1993. Furthermore, the Human Rights Commission highlighted the threat those mines pose to the lives of children and the General Assembly adopted a special resolution on 19 October 1993 (48/7) wherein it requested the Secretary-General to present to the General Assembly a comprehensive report on the manner in which the United Nations contribution to mine clearance could be strengthened and on the advisability of establishing a voluntary trust fund to provide assistance in the area of mine-clearance operations.

Lebanon, which for more than 15 years has been ravaged by a devastating war, supports and emphasizes the Secretary-General's reference to this problem, as Lebanon is beset, in the course of its current reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts, by the problems created by remaining mines. Thousands of Lebanon's citizens have become handicapped as a result of mine

explosions. Lebanon has highlighted the magnitude of the problem it faces as a result of the existence of thousands of mines in its soil in a letter to the Secretary-General contained in document A/49/357/Add.2.

Lebanon also supported resolution 49/215 dated 23 October 1994 in which the Secretary-General was requested to consider the convening of the International Meeting on Mine Clearance, in order to promote the work of the United Nations and international cooperation in this field.

Lebanon participated in that meeting, which was held from 5-7 July in Geneva. In the meeting we requested the inclusion of Lebanon on the list of countries that would benefit from the support of the United Nations in the field of mine clearance. We repeat this request to the General Assembly today and have sent a formal request to that effect to the competent departments in the Organization.

We believe that mine-clearance operations should depend on expertise — national voluntary and qualified expertise — because the process is both long and arduous and could take months or even years. It would be extremely expensive to the international community if it were to undertake the task over such a lengthy period. Therefore, we feel it would be more economical for the international community to allocate all possible international assistance to programmes aimed at training national teams to undertake the task and to providing such teams with the necessary modern equipment that would make it possible to carry out the task.

Oversight by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs over such programmes would emphasize their humanitarian nature. We support the humanitarian and national philosophy upon which the programmes of the Department are built because training programmes of national experts make it possible to enhance cooperation.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the assistance provided by the International Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations in helping establish centres for distribution of prosthetics to the thousands of Lebanese nationals who became handicapped because of mine explosions.

As we witness the suffering of such people and of hundreds of thousands like them in the world, we join the international call for the banning of land-mines and anti-personnel mines as such a ban would provide the solution for the problems that arise from the indiscriminate use of such devices.

Ms. Archibald (Canada): Allow me, first of all, to acknowledge the Secretary-General's leadership in galvanizing public awareness of the pernicious consequences of anti-personnel land-mines. The Canadian Government's concern at the human and economic costs associated with anti-personnel land-mines was stated clearly when the G-7 leaders met in Halifax in June 1995. Canada has acted on that concern for many years. Since 1993, we have provided over $5 million towards de-mining activities in Afghanistan, Cambodia and Angola. Some of these funds have been used to complement technical assistance provided by Canadian de-mining experts. Canadian forces personnel trained Afghans in mine-clearance operations and mine-awareness programmes in Pakistan from 1987 to 1989. Canada continues to provide important technical assistance and leadership to the Cambodia Mine Action Centre (CMAC) by seconding highly qualified military personnel. Canada has made a commitment to provide financial support to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance.

Canada supported the designation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) as the focal point of mine-related activities in the United Nations system. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General on assistance in mine clearance which documents the steady progress made by DHA's Mine Clearance and Policy Unit, despite its limited personnel and modest financial resources.

Still more can be done to improve coordination in mine clearance, and we encourage the Secretary-General to ensure that duplication is avoided among the five United Nations organizations active in this field. DHA's role as a coordination mechanism and as a source of information is particularly important. DHA's central Land-Mine Database and its inventories of mine-awareness materials and mine-clearance techniques are potentially invaluable repositories of information that must be nurtured and expanded upon. More can also be done to rationalize the funding arrangements for United Nations mine-clearance activities. In particular, greater transparency is required with regard to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance, including the provision of more information to Member States on the use made of the funds raised.

Canada fully supports the emphasis the Secretary-General has placed on national capacity-building in mine clearance. One lesson of CMAC's success to date is that the strong support of host authorities is important if mine clearance is to be achieved. Furthermore, Member States

have primary responsibility for clearing land-mines on their territory and for clearing mines they have had a role in laying. We call on Member States that have been affected by the scourge of anti-personnel land-mines to establish mine clearance as a priority objective of their plans for national development and national investment and to create the appropriate administrative structures for effective de-mining. And we call on Member States that have laid land-mines to take the lead in their removal.

Mine clearance is as much a development issue as a humanitarian one. We are pleased that the Secretary-General has emphasized the importance of mine clearance as a dimension of post-conflict reconstruction and development. Uncleared land-mines kill or maim more than 20,000 people each year. Mines destroy infrastructure, contaminate agricultural land and place an unsustainable burden on health and social-welfare systems. We shall encourage the Bretton Woods institutions and the regional development banks to consider investing in mine clearance as a matter of course in their efforts to promote economic and social development in countries suffering from the scourge of uncleared land-mines. For example, where appropriate, these institutions might be encouraged to create employment opportunities for demobilized soldiers as de-miners.

Canada was pleased to participate in the International Meeting on Mine Clearance, convened by the Secretary-General in Geneva in July, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 49/215. The Meeting achieved its objectives of enhancing awareness, strengthening cooperation and drawing forth political and financial support. We would be prepared to consider supporting the convening of a follow-up meeting only if that meeting's potential contribution to the further enhancement of cooperation and coordination were first made clear.

(*spoke in French*)

There is no doubt that it is essential to defuse existing mines, but, above all, we must prevent new mines from being placed. The outcome of the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which met in Vienna from 25 September to 13 October 1995, was disappointing. We are pleased that parties decided to reconvene in January, and again in April, to seek agreement on limitations on the use of land-mines. We call upon Member States that have suffered from land-mines to take the lead in the efforts of the international community to control their use. As a first step, these countries should sign and ratify the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which May Be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. They should also ensure that other countries fully appreciate the economic and social consequences of land-mines.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada is committed to the ultimate elimination of land-mines. We do not produce or export land-mines, nor have we used them since the Korean War. In recent public statements, the Minister of Foreign Affairs reiterated this position and made it clear that he will not permit the export of land-mines from Canada. In this regard, Canada was pleased to co-sponsor a resolution, at the recent session of the First Committee of the General Assembly, calling on all States to institute export moratoriums on anti-personnel land-mines. Canada looks to the international community to work together to ensure that we strengthen the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, our only global instrument to deal with this ongoing tragedy.

My delegation is pleased to add Canada's name to the list of sponsors of the draft resolution before the General Assembly on assistance in mine clearance. Canada will continue to support efforts to address this humanitarian disaster.

Mr. Owada (Japan): The problem of uncleared land-mines is the one problem the international community has long been aware of that can no longer be left aside. I believe we have reached the point where the international community has to take concrete and swift actions, as the number of mines left unattended around the world today has soared to some 110 million. They are causing death and injury to tens of thousands of innocent civilians — men, women and children — every year.

Already massive in number, these uncleared land-mines are creating a serious situation in which the havoc and human suffering that they cause, especially to the innocent civilian victims, cannot be tolerated. The simple fact is that more land-mines are being laid than are being disposed of through current mine-clearance activities. In 1993, the international community succeeded in finding and removing some 100,000 mines; nevertheless, 2 million new ones were laid during the same year, leaving a net world increase of 1.9 million uncleared mines for that year alone. Moreover, the task of locating mines is being made more difficult because the progress in

military technology relating to mines has outpaced the progress in developing more sophisticated detection systems.

In a very real sense, this is not only a humanitarian problem; it is also a political and social problem, to the extent that the present state of affairs impedes the often delicate post-conflict peace-building process and hinders reconstruction and rehabilitation in countries afflicted by war. Thus, at a time when the prospects for lasting peace in the former Yugoslavia are improving and when encouraging progress is being made in addressing refugee situations in Afghanistan, Mozambique and elsewhere, it is all the more important that the international community tackle the issue of land-mines as a matter of great urgency.

Efforts are being made. More than 100 delegates representing States and international organizations gathered in Geneva last July to tackle this problem at the International Meeting on Mine Clearance. A consensus emerged from this conference that the international community should act as one to address this problem in a comprehensive manner. Many delegations responded positively to the appeal of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for financial support for United Nations efforts in this area.

Japan finds these developments to be most encouraging. More than $84 million was pledged in support of multilateral and bilateral activities for mine clearance, including $7 million for a standby capacity. The Meeting also achieved its basic objective of raising international consciousness about the global nature of the problem posed by uncleared land-mines. It also succeeded in facilitating an exchange of technical information on mine clearance, mine surveys and the medical treatment and rehabilitation for mine victims.

I should like to take this opportunity to express the deep appreciation of my delegation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Organizations's Department of Humanitarian Affairs for their efforts in convening that conference in Geneva and bringing it to a successful conclusion.

However positive the results achieved at that Meeting may have been, they cannot obscure the gigantic size of the task still ahead of us. While it is gratifying that a first step has been taken in the right direction, we shall have to take many more steps if we are to be successful in bringing about a radical change to the present situation. For this purpose, the Government of Japan is ready to offer its utmost cooperation as the international community strives to address this issue. In this context, as my delegation stated in Geneva, Japan believes that there are four areas on which those efforts should be concentrated.

First, clearance activities must receive our full support as a matter of first priority. To date, Japan has contributed close to $20 million to the mine-clearance activities of the United Nations. This includes $12 million for the United Nations Office for Humanitarian Assistance Coordination to Afghanistan; $100,000 for the mine-clearance project of the Organization of American States in Nicaragua; $2.5 million for the mine-clearance activities in Cambodia; and $3 million for the activities undertaken by the United Nations peace-keeping operations in the former Yugoslavia. Furthermore, at the Meeting in Geneva, Japan pledged to contribute $2 million to the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance.

While Japan intends to continue such assistance in the future, it is essential that the social consciousness of the international community be mobilized to address seriously this important problem. With this point in mind, my Government is inviting a senior expert with experience in United Nations mine-clearance activities to visit Japan for the purpose of conducting exchanges of views on this issue with government officials and people from the private sector in Japan. I believe this initiative will contribute to a better understanding in Japan of the dimensions and complexities of the land-mine problem. It will, hopefully, raise the consciousness of the people of Japan about the importance of helping the victims of anti-personnel mines.

Secondly, there is an urgent need to develop new technologies to enable us to engage in mine-detection and clearance activities in a much more efficient and safer way. Towards this end, it is imperative that we join forces in terms of pooling our financial and human resources. We in Japan, both within the Government and in the private sector, are prepared to make a significant contribution to this end, making full use of the technological and industrial expertise that Japan may be able to offer in this area.

Thirdly, it is the strong belief of my delegation that, if we are serious about achieving a meaningful solution to the problem of land-mines, we must work in all seriousness to prevent their further proliferation. Japan is determined to make every effort to strengthen the legal framework for the restrictions on anti-personnel land-

mines. For this purpose, it will continue to cooperate with like-minded countries to reinforce the restrictions on the use and transfer of mines under Protocol II of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons of 1980.

In this regard, I should like to draw the attention of the Assembly to the results achieved at the twenty-sixth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, convened in Geneva earlier this month. The Conference focused its attention, *inter alia*, on the issue of anti-personnel land-mines as one of the gravest humanitarian problems. The resolution adopted at the Conference, expressing indignation at the indiscriminate effects of such mines on civilians and at their disruption of humanitarian relief activities, reaffirmed the ultimate goal of the international community to achieve the eventual elimination of these weapons. It urged States Parties to the 1980 Convention to redouble their efforts for stronger and effective measures to end the indiscriminate effects of land-mine use and to move towards the eventual elimination of land-mines. Japan fully supports the thrust of this resolution.

The fourth area demanding our attention is the need for assistance in the treatment and rehabilitation of the victims of anti-personnel mines. Japan, together with other countries, has gained extensive experience in this area through its activities in Cambodia and intends to expand its efforts by offering financial and technical assistance wherever it is needed.

In concluding my statement, I wish to reaffirm that we in Japan, working closely with other, like-minded countries, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations and other organizations, are determined to do everything in our power to prevent these most inhumane of all military weapons from inflicting unbearable suffering upon our fellow citizens of the world. To use anti-personnel mines irresponsibly is nothing other than to engage in indiscriminate slaughter, ignoring the classic distinction between combatants and non-combatant civilians. It is a means to no other end but mayhem. Such indifference to human suffering can claim no valid rationale and has no justification. My delegation believes that it is high time we pledged our commitment to the common goal of eventually eliminating all anti-personnel land-mines.

Mr. Huaraka (Namibia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt): The importance attached by the United Nations to the problem of mine clearance is a clear indication of the seriousness of that problem. The existence of land-mines endangers thousands of human lives and poses political, economic, environmental and social problems to many States.

In resolution 49/215 the General Assembly welcomed the establishment by the Secretary-General of a voluntary trust fund to finance and facilitate the launching of mine-clearance operations. The Assembly also expressed the hope that international cooperation through the United Nations and other specialized agencies would find the necessary support from all Member States, particularly those that have the financial means.

Egypt, along with other developing countries, is of the view that the enormous financial and technical problems associated with mine-clearance operations should not be shouldered by the affected States alone. The affected States, in most cases, are victims in need of financial and technical assistance, which are essential to initiate and continue mine-clearance operations. For this reason we are of the view that special attention should be given to the affected developing countries in the planning and in the execution of United Nations and other specialized-agency activities and resources in this regard.

The continued existence of more than 23 million land-mines scattered throughout 288,000 acres of Egyptian territory causes serious concern to the Government of Egypt. Some of these land-mines go back to the famous battle of El-Alamein during the Second World War. Some others were planted by Israel during its occupation of Sinai. The Egyptian concern is doubled due to the fact that so far the assistance received is inadequate in the light of the magnitude of this enormous task.

The Egyptian Armed Forces have started, within existing resources, an ambitious plan to clear the Egyptian territories of all land-mines, whether planted in the course of the Second World War or during the Arab-Israeli armed conflict. In the period from 1981 to 1991, the Egyptian Armed Forces managed to clear 11 million land-mines. In July 1991 Egypt started a new plan with a view to clearing the remaining 23 million land-mines by 2006.

In this connection, I should like to stress the following points.

First, implementing the new plan would pose enormous financial and technical burdens which could not be carried by the Egyptian Government alone.

Secondly, the cost of clearing the land-mines has increased in view of the fact that a large number of them are buried under thick layers of sand and lie 6 metres below the surface.

Thirdly, the existence of those land-mines over such large areas stands in the way of the Egyptian Government's efforts to utilize the natural resources existing in these areas, paralyses all development efforts in the western desert and threatens the tourist industry in Sinai and the western desert.

Fourthly, there is an urgent need for those States that planted the land-mines on Egyptian territory to present accurate registration or accurate maps indicating the exact locations of the land-mines.

As Egypt announced at the International Meeting on Mine Clearance in July 1995, and at the Budapest conference on the American-British initiative concerning land-mines control, there is perhaps no other State in the world today that has so many land-mines as Egypt, with approximately one land-mine for every two inhabitants. Egypt emphasized at those meetings that any new system that deals with the problem of land-mines should include two main elements: full compensation for the victims and their families and sufficient financial and technological assistance to clear the remaining mines.

On the basis of those considerations, Egypt believes that its ambitious plan would be greatly enhanced through the following measures: first, payment of all mine-clearance expenses by the States that planted the land-mines; secondly, the organization of training programmes on mine-clearance operations; thirdly, the provision of advanced mine-clearance equipment; and, fourthly, the provision of adequate financial funds to cover the clearance operations, including administration and logistics, which have so far reached $142 million, plus 170 million Egyptian pounds.

The report of the Secretary-General on this agenda item indicates that the United Nations approach to the land-mine problem is based on the principle of capacity-building, putting the responsibility for clearing land-mines ultimately on the Government of the affected country. My delegation does not subscribe to this approach. We believe that the responsibility for mine clearance is not the sole responsibility of the affected country. It should be regarded as the responsibility of the international community and particularly the responsibility of those States that planted land-mines.

The United Nations has an essential role to play, not only in building the capacity of the affected States but also in ensuring that affected States receive full and accurate maps or registers of the locations of land-mines and also in mobilizing international support in order to cover the expenses of land-mine clearance, taking into consideration the primary responsibility of the States that planted the mines.

In conclusion, land-mines are a global, grave humanitarian problem. The problem has to be addressed in a comprehensive manner. The cooperation of the international community, in particular the States that have the ability to provide financial and technical assistance, is the only way to save mankind from the evils of this destructive danger.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): The issue of land-mines, with their lethal nature and collateral effects, has focused the attention of the world community and has caused serious concern over the past several years. The world is shocked by the monumental number of mines infesting various countries at times of conflict and following conflicts, as well as by the horrendous consequences of their indiscriminate use. This issue defies the imagination, and demands comprehensive yet prompt solutions.

The increasing number of civilian casualties and the ever widening disruption of development programmes in contaminated territories constitute the most serious consequences of the unbridled and indiscriminate use of land-mines. Furthermore, caring for the victims of land-mines places a significant financial burden upon mine-stricken States and their dwindling resources. Moreover, mine contamination has rendered huge expanses of agricultural land unproductive and uninhabitable. Without a doubt, this ominous trend must be reversed in the interest of humanity and of international peace and security. In fact, as noted by the Secretary-General, the world is awakening to the reality that the proliferation of land-mines poses a major obstacle to development, and must be halted.

Every month, land-mines claim 800 lives and maim more than 1,000 people. Such levels of casualties surely charge the international community with the responsibility

to respond to this compelling challenge and to spare no effort to alleviate this senseless human suffering.

My country appreciates the depth and magnitude of the many problems associated with the mine clearance in post-conflict cases. During the Iran-Iraq war, nearly 16 million land-mines and unexploded sub-munitions were laid in Iranian territory temporarily occupied at various stages of the war, covering more than 4 million hectares. Over the past six years, we have embarked upon a massive mine clearance operation in order to enable civilians displaced by the war to return to their homes and resume normal life. We have succeeded in neutralizing more than one third of all the mines and sub-munitions laid in our country. However, lack of access to maps of mine-fields and to advanced equipment and technology have not only slowed down our efforts but have also caused unacceptable casualties both among those involved in clearance operations and, even more regrettably, among innocent civilians.

My country therefore welcomes recent United Nations initiatives in the area of mine clearance. These initiatives signify the international community's awareness of the urgency and complexity of the issue at hand, an issue that can only be effectively addressed by concerted international cooperation. We should, however, be aware that the ongoing campaign is not commensurate with the magnitude of the problem. If mine clearance activities continue at the current pace, it will take more than 1,000 years to wipe out only the existing mines. It should be noted that the rate of mine clearance is 34 times slower than that of mine laying.

Given the fact that the cost to clear one mine currently stands at around $1,000, one can easily comprehend the tremendous burden these operations place on mine-stricken developing countries. Lack of progress in mine-clearance technology further exacerbates the predicament. Unfortunately, development of this particular technology has not received due enthusiasm in developed countries, and consequently the technologies used for mine clearance are almost the same as those employed in the 1940s. Only a few countries have been engaged in research to advance existing technologies. At the same time, no serious attempt has been made to transfer newer technologies to developing countries. Various types of equipment continue to remain subject to discriminatory and unjustifiable export control regimes.

We recognize, in this regard, a special role for the United Nations. The United Nations should be more involved in management and long-term planning, rather than focusing mainly on mine clearance activities. It should also act as an international focal point for planning and coordination of research on improved mine clearance technology, as well as for transfer of State technologies. Furthermore, the United Nations needs to be empowered to ensure that no State applies any restrictions that would hinder or otherwise impede, in any manner, access to technology. At the same time, it should be provided with the financial means necessary to fulfil these responsibilities.

All States, particularly those which have the technology and equipment required for mine clearance, should declare to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs the kind of assistance, both financial and technical, that they will provide to United Nations programmes in this area. It is indispensable that any serious United Nations programme facilitate the access of mine-stricken nations to the necessary machinery and technology for mine clearance.

The establishment of a central database in the Department of Humanitarian Affairs is a step in the right direction. The database needs to be expanded to include information on available state-of-the-art technology for mine clearance and on the type and extent of restriction each country applies with respect to access by other States to this technology. This information is a necessary first step in enhancing our collective ability to deal with this menace at the global level.

In this context, we believe also that serious efforts should be made to establish and strengthen international norms and regulations on the use of anti-personnel land-mines. It is unfortunate that the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects was unable to finalize an agreement on provisions for further restricting or prohibiting certain kinds of land-mines, including those which are not detectable. But we hope that the States parties will reach such an agreement at the resumed session of the conference.

Mr. Horin (Ukraine): The global problem of uncleared land-mines is one of the most widespread and serious humanitarian problems currently confronting the international community. The proliferation of mines, particularly anti-personnel land-mines, creates dramatic problems in a number of regions and endangers the lives of millions of individuals.

It is worth repeating the figures that show the grim picture of the global land-mine crisis, with 110 million land-mines scattered throughout 64 countries. An estimated 800 people are killed each month by uncleared land-mines, and perhaps as many as 2,000 are injured and maimed. Many of these victims perish years after the end of conflicts and civil wars. This prolonged effect of anti-personnel land-mines, lasting for several years and even decades, is extremely dangerous. Owing to the number of these so-called delayed casualties caused by these anti-personnel land-mines, they have earned the definition "weapon of mass destruction with slow action".

Clear proof of this is the historical experience of Ukraine. Though 50 years have elapsed since the end of the last war that took place in the territory of Ukraine, there still remains a huge quantity of various types of ammunition, such as unexploded air bombs, artillery shells, grenades, mines and other explosive devices, in former combat regions. As long as their exact locations are not available, they remain dangerous for the civilian population.

I would like to note that in the post-war period, more than 24 million units of explosive munitions, including 3 million mines and about 10 million other explosive devices, have been neutralized and liquidated. Within the last three years alone, 83,000 units of explosive devices were liquidated in Ukraine. During the entire post-war period, more than 1,500 civilians and 130 de-miners have lost their lives.

Apart from the human costs, uncleared mines are an enormous obstacle to economic development and political stability. In the most severely affected countries, land-mines impede the repatriation of refugees and displaced persons; render arable land useless; paralyse key elements of national infrastructure, such as electrical-power grids, water-delivery systems, roads and railroads; and overload already overburdened medical and welfare systems. They can even threaten the process of implementation of peace agreements.

The delegation of Ukraine believes that only full-scale international efforts can finally resolve this problem, and it is satisfied with the current level of cooperation in the field of mine clearance. In our opinion, this is fairly reflected in the draft resolution, which our delegation has co-sponsored.

Recent experience shows that developing an indigenous de-mining capacity is the most successful way to tackle large-scale de-mining operations. Ukraine has expressed its readiness to provide training for foreign de-miners in our military institutions and in the field in affected countries. From our point of view, such training will be especially useful for experts from countries faced with the task of clearing mines produced in the former Soviet Union. At the same time, we have expressed our readiness to provide qualified military and technical experts for participation in mine-clearance operations under United Nations control or under bilateral agreements with other countries.

Nevertheless, even with a significant increase in de-mining efforts worldwide and foreseeable advances in technology, it will be impossible to solve the global problem of land-mines unless their proliferation is halted, bearing in mind that very few of the States in which conflict has resulted in land-mine contamination produce land-mines themselves. More than 85 per cent of all uncleared land-mines in those States were purchased or transferred from some of the roughly 40 mine-producing countries, and such purchases and transfers continue.

Ukraine and some other members of the international community recognize the need to limit the proliferation of land-mines. In support of General Assembly resolution 48/75 K of 16 December 1993, calling for a moratorium on the transfer of excessively injurious anti-personnel land-mines, the Ukrainian Government introduced a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel mines. This moratorium entered into force on 1 September 1995, for a four-year period. It is worth mentioning that the Ukrainian moratorium includes all types of anti-personnel land-mines. The delegation of Ukraine takes this opportunity to call upon all States that are still hesitant to adopt such a moratorium to take a decisive step in favour of doing so.

In the course of the Vienna Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, Ukraine, along with other countries, supported the expansion of the scope of Protocol II to that Convention — which is now limited to international conflicts — so that it would be applicable to internal armed conflicts as well as in peacetime. We fully support the provisions of the draft Protocol II concerning the obligatory inclusion of detectable elements, self-destruction mechanisms and self-deactivating elements in mine construction. We also support the view that in all circumstances, the use of booby-traps and other devices that are in any way attached to protective emblems, children's toys, medical equipment and so on

must be completely prohibited. The delegation of Ukraine expresses its hope that the second stage of the work of the Review Conference of the States parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons will result in the adoption of a new, revised Protocol II.

We wish to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the activities of the United Nations on assistance in mine clearance.

Ukraine recognizes the importance of the United Nations in this field. We support the designation of the Mine Clearance and Policy Unit as a depository of information and data that can facilitate international research in the field of improving methods of mine clearance. We also support the coordinating role of the United Nations in the fields of mine awareness, surveying, mine detection and clearance. The delegation of Ukraine would like to assure the Members of the United Nations that it will continue its active participation in the efforts of the international community in the field of mine clearance.

Our delegation fully supports the draft resolution, and we hope that it will finally be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Phanit (Thailand): On behalf of the Thai delegation, I would like to congratulate the Secretary-General and his staff on the timely issuance of his report on Assistance in mine clearance, as contained in document A/50/408. This report not only provides detailed insight into how land-mines adversely affect all aspects of economic and social life, but also contains some useful recommendations on such matters as the management of mine-clearance programmes and the control of land-mine proliferation.

Thailand is joining in the international effort to strengthen international cooperation in solving land-mine problems. We recognize that land-mines, anti-tank mines and other explosive devices represent a clear and present danger to the lives of all people, be they farmers or fighters, civilian or military, but especially those who are in the peace-keeping and humanitarian fields. We have tried, and will continue to try, our utmost to assist others in this common endeavour to combat the scourge of land-mines.

The fast-growing problem of land-mines and their after-effects is, without a doubt, one of the most egregious and long-lasting dangers of any war. Despite the fact that a conflict may have ended, uncleared land-mines can, and do, remain lethal for decades. They go on killing, maiming and wounding indiscriminately. Evidence from a number of countries shows that mines are often used as part of deliberate military strategies designed to spread terror among civilians or prevent them from cultivating the land to produce food for themselves or enemy troops.

As a result, most of the victims have been non-combatants and often include villagers, women and children. The loss of a limb is common among those who survive. It is apparent that these people are in great need of medical treatment. This is why my delegation is heartened to learn from the report that all United Nations mine-clearance programmes have medical facilities attached to each team or site.

As one of the countries facing the horrendous threat of land-mines in one of our border areas, Thailand welcomes the United Nations efforts towards mine clearance and land-mine control. In particular, my delegation wishes to commend the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs for its central role in coordinating with the various agencies involved to implement such notable programmes as mine-awareness education, mine-clearance training and mine-related medical support. We also welcome the participation and efforts of international non-governmental organizations in responding to the land-mine crisis.

In our view, uncleared land-mines stand as an impediment to the process of national reconstruction in the aftermath of armed conflict. Thus, a concerted effort should be made to restore an environment conducive to national capacity-building and a lasting peace. In the case of Cambodia, as soon as the Paris Peace Agreements were signed, Thailand dispatched two engineering battalions from the Royal Thai Army, under a bilateral agreement and also under the mandate of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), to carry out de-mining and road repair in Cambodia. The primary objectives of these two operations were to facilitate UNTAC's deployment and its manifold activities and to reconstruct the war-torn infrastructure needed for the safe repatriation and resettlement of more than 300,000 Cambodian refugees and displaced persons who had been residing in camps in Thailand for 13 years.

A field with one land-mine is as unsafe for cultivation as a field with 100 land-mines, so when there is fear of mine contamination, the entire area must be painstakingly combed either to remove or detonate the mines, or at least to demonstrate that the area is free of

mines. For Thailand, this situation is all too familiar. Today many Thai officials and villagers who live in the seven provinces along the Thai-Cambodian border are still suffering from the scattered minefields, remnants of over a decade of armed struggle among factions in our neighbouring country. The number of victims is impossible to estimate and so, too, is the number of mines. In Thailand, we have only three mine-clearance operation units with a de-mining capacity of 2,500 to 3,000 mines per year for each unit. From this example, it is clear that land-mines have devastating effects — not only in a country where there has been armed conflict but equally so in a neighbouring country. We therefore wish to call for non-selective assistance to all affected countries and not just countries of armed conflict.

From the lessons we have learned in Cambodia, Thailand realizes that canine detection and other indigenous de-mining techniques are simply not sufficient to deal with the enormity of the problem. We believe that the advanced technologies in mine clearance will accelerate the pace of the clearance and thereby mitigate unnecessary damage to life and limb. That is why Thailand attaches particular importance to the acquisition of these new technologies. They are essential to combat effectively the mine-infested fields in and around our country. In this connection, the Thai delegation welcomes the initiative to convene a panel of experts on new technologies as part of the International Meeting on assistance in mine clearance held in Geneva last July. It is our hope that a programme of training on technological aspects of mine clearance will eventually be provided to all mine-affected countries. With new technologies at our disposal and with greater expertise in de-mining gained through better training, Thailand would be in a position to make a more effective contribution in mine clearance to the international community and to share its new expertise with other countries as well.

Allow me to take this opportunity to state unequivocally that Thailand does not manufacture land-mines. We also support all relevant United Nations resolutions on assistance in mine clearance and on the moratorium on the export of anti-personnel land-mines. Thailand holds the strong view that land-mine manufacturing and exporting countries must, at least, strictly observe the moratorium and consider ways and means to reduce the presence of this atrocious type of weapon. More importantly, those who benefit directly from the sale of these weapons have the moral responsibility to bear more of the burden of clearing them. In this respect, I hasten to add that major financial support and/or other forms of contributions are expected from them to provide assistance to all mine-infested countries whose peoples continue to be victimized.

So long as internal and regional conflicts still persist in various parts of the world, it is unfortunate for us and for generations to come that millions more land-mines will continue to be laid. Strong political will on the part of Member States is essential if we are to be able to move effectively to reduce and to eliminate this terrible scourge. Bringing the problem to this Assembly and conducting this open debate are definitely positive steps towards generating the requisite political will in the international community. The Secretary-General's report provides a further impetus towards raising international awareness.

It remains for us, the Member States, to do our best to marginalize the use of land-mines, with a view to eventually eliminating these "seeds of death". Thus, at the risk of sounding repetitive, I would like to urge all Member States to strive towards rendering full cooperation to the mine-clearance activities as mandated by this General Assembly. On our part, I can assure the Assembly that Thailand will not be found wanting.

Mr. García (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): In his report on agenda item 70, contained in document A/50/701 and dated 3 November 1995, the Secretary-General states that

> "Land-mines are in reality a weapon of mass destruction, in slow motion, because they indiscriminately kill or maim massive numbers of human beings over a long period of time." (*A/50/701, para. 5*)

There could not be a more appropriate or pathetic definition.

Land-mines cause mutilations and death not only during but also after conflicts, and they have devastating effects upon entire nations, impeding the work of economic reconstruction and normalization. Land-mines do not heed peace agreements or cease-fires; they are perpetually at war — against everything and everyone.

There are more than 110 million land-mines spread over 64 countries, almost all of them developing countries. Between 2 million and 5 million additional land-mines are laid each year. In addition to those that have been laid, there are between 100 million and 150 million in stockpiles.

In view of the significant increase in the number of internal conflicts in recent years, the land-mine problem has acquired a new dimension, and the indiscriminate effects of mines are suffered by a greater number of people. In the last two decades, more than 65 million land-mines were laid during internal conflicts.

According to reports from the International Committee of the Red Cross, more than 800 people are killed by mines every month. Most of these are civilians, such as farmers, women and children. Thousands more are wounded or maimed. Land-mine clearance is therefore an imperative. It entails enormous work, and difficulties in the economic, social and technical fields have to be overcome.

Each mine that earns $3 to $15 for the retailer incurs for the afflicted country a clearance cost of $300 to $1,000. Thus, clearing the 110 million mines that have already been laid would cost $33 billion to $110 billion. And this takes no account of the irreparable damage to humans — death and mutilation — or of the huge costs of medical treatment, prostheses and rehabilitation. It is estimated that currently more than 250,000 maimed or mutilated people require a prosthesis.

The true dimension of the problem can be illustrated by the fact that if land-mine proliferation were halted in 1996 it would take more than 10 centuries, at the current rate of clearance and provision of funds for this purpose, to eliminate mines from the face of the Earth.

I should like to refer briefly to the Secretary-General's report (A/50/408) on assistance in mine clearance dated 6 September 1995 — in particular, to chapter V, entitled "Actions for a political solution", which says,

> "during the past year, approximately 100,000 land-mines were removed, while between 2 and 5 million mines were newly laid. These figures emphasize that this is not a static problem, but a humanitarian crisis that is growing rapidly. They also indicate that mine clearance alone, even at the increased rate that it is hoped to achieve, will not solve the problem. Equally important are increased and concerted political efforts to stop the further proliferation of land-mines." *(A/50/408, para. 100)*

It is clear that it will be impossible to solve the global problem of land-mines unless their proliferation is arrested. The best and most effective way of achieving this goal is a complete ban on the production, use and transfer of all land-mines. Meanwhile, until such a prohibition is achieved, the clock will be running tragically against all of us.

For the time being, all measures aimed at slowing the proliferation of land-mines are welcome. Internally, each State, in exercise of its sovereignty, is doing what it can within its limited resources and with the technology it can afford. None the less, the dimensions and nature of the problem require that effective international cooperation be undertaken with the utmost urgency.

We consider that the establishment of the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance was a positive step. The international community expects an increase in the generous contributions to this Fund, and it is particularly anxious to see considerable contributions from those that in the past have profited from the trade in land-mines and thus bear a moral responsibility in this respect, to say the least.

This Organization must play a more active and effective role to assist affected countries. It must also coordinate efforts with regional organizations that are already engaged in relevant tasks. But above all, it must promote very clearly and vigorously the deeper solution to the problem: a complete ban on the production, use and transfer of all land-mines.

Mr. Inderfurth (United States of America): This body is familiar with the numbers associated with the global anti-personnel land-mine crisis: between 85 million and 110 million land-mines scattered throughout 64 countries.

With the peace agreement recently concluded in Dayton, Ohio, we are learning more about two of these countries — Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia — and their land-mine crisis. The true scale of the mine problem in these countries has been obscured by the continuing conflict, which today we hope has come to an end.

There are an estimated 6 million land-mines in Bosnia and Croatia combined. These hidden killers pose a serious threat to the peace-keepers now being deployed. From April 1992 to June 1995, land-mine explosions in these two countries killed 20 United Nations peace-keepers and wounded 204. Moreover, millions of refugees are placed at risk as they return to their homes. It is now time for the world community to take action to address this problem.

While land-mines are maiming or killing an estimated 26,000 people every year in areas such as the former Yugoslavia, at the present rate of clearance it may take thousands of years and tens of millions of dollars to rid the world of these weapons. But the enormity of the task should not dissuade us from the effort. These numbers, which are so intimidating, are also a cry for action. And what better body to answer that cry than the United Nations, which, under its Charter, has a commitment to

> "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war"?

The United States has been active in the global fight to prevent civilian land-mine casualties. We have responded on three fronts: providing mine-awareness and mine-clearance training for victim States; researching new technologies to locate and destroy mines; and preventing the indiscriminate proliferation and irresponsible use of land-mines in the future.

The United States currently assists de-mining programmes in 12 countries on three continents. We support de-mining efforts in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia and Mozambique, where we have worked closely with the United Nations. We are also aiding de-mining efforts in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Namibia, Rwanda, Nicaragua, Honduras and Costa Rica. And we will soon begin to provide assistance to Laos. United States de-mining aid worldwide totalled more than $46 million during 1995.

The aim of United States humanitarian-assistance programmes is to create a sustainable indigenous de-mining capacity, working closely with local and national Governments. Local populations benefit directly from the clearing of fields for crops, roads for travel and infrastructure for rehabilitation. They also gain confidence in their Governments, which are actively solving the land-mine problem. This regional stability is a primary goal of United States foreign policy.

During the past year, the United States has devoted $10 million to the research and development of new technology to locate and destroy land-mines. The United States Department of Defense recently field-tested 30 new pieces of equipment that resulted from its research. While it is too early in the process to predict a time-frame, we are confident that this programme will provide new tools for use around the world in the not-too-distant future.

The United States also is committed to preventing the proliferation and indiscriminate and irresponsible use of anti-personnel land-mines. In 1994, and again in October, in his speeches before the United Nations, President Clinton stressed the high priority of this effort for the United States and called for the eventual elimination of these weapons. We are pleased to have heard several delegations reiterate this call today.

As a first step towards that goal of eventual elimination, the United States enacted a unilateral moratorium on the export of anti-personnel land-mines in 1992. For the last two years, the General Assembly adopted by consensus the United States-introduced resolutions calling for States to adopt moratoriums on the exports of anti-personnel land-mines. This year, a similar resolution has 111 co-sponsors and was adopted by consensus by the General Assembly. So far, more than 25 States, in addition to the United States, have adopted anti-personnel land-mine export moratoriums.

In March, the United States deposited its instrument of ratification for the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, thus ensuring that we would be a full Party at the September Review Conference in Vienna. Much to our regret, however, delegations to the Conference could not reach consensus on key issues to strengthen the restrictions in the land-mine protocols, and so the Conference was recessed. Nonetheless, progress was made, and we are confident that the necessary consensus will be achieved when the Conference reconvenes in January. In support of this objective, the United States co-sponsored the First Committee resolution on the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which was introduced by the Government of Sweden.

The United States and the United Kingdom have developed a multilateral anti-personnel land-mine control programme to regulate the production, transfer, and stockpiling of these weapons. The initiative would complement our efforts on the Convention on conventional weapons.

But even all of these efforts by the United States are not enough. The size of the problem confronting us demands widespread, coordinated action by the entire international community. It will require cooperation between land-mine victim States, donor Governments, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

A cornerstone of this cooperative effort was the United Nations-sponsored International Meeting on Mine Clearance, held this past July in Geneva, which I had the privilege of attending. Representatives from 97 States, 31 NGOs, 16 United Nations agencies, and 11 intergovernmental organizations met to discuss solutions to the land-mine problem. The Meeting catalogued global efforts of US$ 84 million for mine clearance and mine-awareness programmes, and raised over US$ 20 million for the Voluntary Trust Fund for Mine Clearance and over US$ 7 million for the de-mining stand-by capacity. This event raised awareness of the problem and set the tone for the cooperation which will be required in the future. As Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said at that meeting, the international community must take specific and tangible steps to address the "intolerable situation caused by the proliferation of anti-personnel land-mines".

The resolution on assistance in mine clearance before us today complements United States and other initiatives and supplements the International Meeting on Mine Clearance in indicating increased global cooperation. We applaud the United Nations for its work. Additional mine clearance assistance programmes are urgently needed to clean up this deadly debris of war. We must do all that we possibly can to address this horrible problem. I am therefore pleased to affirm that the United States fully supports this resolution on assistance in mine clearance as an original co-sponsor.

Mr. Fadal-ur-Rahman (Pakistan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me first of all to thank His Excellency the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report entitled "Assistance in mine clearance". The report, indeed, provides us with the main elements which will promote our efforts in dealing with all the aspects relating to mine clearance.

It is indeed gratifying to know that there is an increasing awareness within the international community of the acuteness and the scope of dangers caused by the use of land-mines, which have been planted irresponsibly and indiscriminately. The Secretary-General has shown, quite rightly, in his report that land-mines do not only kill human beings but also destroy whole countries because they hamper the resumption of normal economic and social life.

It is horrifying to acquaint oneself with the facts relating to the arbitrary and indiscriminate use of land-mines. More than 110 million land-mines have been scattered throughout the world. Every month more than 800 people fall victim to those land-mines, most of them civilians and innocent bystanders. The number of people maimed or handicapped is even greater.

Those figures are not abstract statistics as far as Pakistan is concerned. We ourselves have experienced at first hand the devastation caused by the indiscriminate use of land-mines. More than 10 million mines are scattered throughout Afghanistan. Thousands of Afghan refugees maimed by those mines have been treated in our medical facilities. Pakistan, in fact, has undertaken the treatment of those victims and their rehabilitation and, moreover, we continue to host a very large number of refugees, for land-mines are an obstacle to the safe return of such refugees to their homes.

Mine clearance is indeed a precondition for reconstruction in any country. It is necessary to re-establish an environment which will enable society to resume its ordinary daily life.

It is comforting to note that steps have been taken over the past few years to alleviate the problem of land-mines and particularly, the humanitarian aspect of the effects of such mines.

The United Nations has established a strategy to deal with the problem of land-mines, and has even established the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in emergency situations and to complement the contributions of Member States. The International Meeting on Mine Clearance was held in July 1995. This was the first time such a large number of politicians and experts from different parts of the world came together to discuss all the dimensions of the problem of land-mines. In fact, the Meeting, which brought together almost 100 government representatives and 60 organizations, demonstrated increased awareness of the problem of land-mines. Contributions were pledged to the tune of over US$ 20 million at the Meeting. Such financing allows the Fund to become fully operational. Efforts are still being deployed to alleviate the suffering of the victims of the indiscriminate use of land-mines. However, mine clearance is very slow and lags behind. Last year only 100,000 mines were cleared. At this rate, we would need approximately 1,000 years to clear the 110 million mines scattered all over the world.

Here, two justified questions come to mind. Why the slow pace? Can the clearance of mines be speeded up? The very obvious reasons for the slow pace are the lack of resources, the extremely limited capacity of the affected countries, the primitive nature of detection and

clearance methods of mines and, above all, the lack of international technical cooperation. However, the problems are not insuperable and could be overcome by objective planning.

The Secretary-General, in his report, recognized that the cost of initiating a mine-clearance operation is usually very high because mine-clearance programmes often make it necessary for the country that puts such programmes in place to build the infrastructures needed for their implementation. Unfortunately, most of the affected countries do not have the necessary resources to initiate the operations. Moreover, the existence of mines in their soil aggravates the paucity of such resources as it transforms arable lands into areas that cannot be cultivated.

The setting up of the Voluntary Trust Fund is a step in the right direction. However, the Fund is but a supplementary source of financing for United Nations programmes. The purpose of the Fund is to provide financing for mine-clearance programmes whenever other financing is unavailable, in order to speed up United Nations response to the problems caused by land-mines. Therefore, contributions and grants should be given outside the framework of the Trust Fund itself in order to ensure sufficient financing for mine-clearance activities. The proposal for setting up a United Nations de-mining stand-by capacity is indeed a good one as it would increase the available resources in the form of the contributions in kind for mine clearance. We hope that many contributions will be forthcoming in the form of trained experts and equipment to be put at the disposal of the United Nations.

Financing is necessary not only for field operations, but also for research in order to improve the technology and the techniques of mine clearance. The international community should indeed redouble its efforts to develop speedy, safe and cost-effective mine-clearance techniques and to set up a mechanism for the encouragement of international cooperation in this particular field.

The availability of the necessary technology and of steady and increasing financing are also essential for the enhancement of the national mine-clearance capacity of the affected countries.

We believe that those who scatter and plant land-mines should bear the main responsibility for clearing those mines. Those who have caused chaos by scattering such mines in an indiscriminate fashion should not be allowed to clear out of the scene of the massacre with impunity — they should be made to pay the price for the chaos and the havoc they have wreaked.

International mine-clearance operations should be based on that particular principle rather than burdening the affected countries alone with the responsibility of mine clearance.

Mines are still being planted without the provision of maps that would show the locations of such minefields and this indeed is in defiance of international law. The problem is not static, and in this respect the relevant agencies of the United Nations are considering measures to control armaments and disarmament. We do not need to dwell on this point at length, for Pakistan has been and will continue to be part of all the multilateral efforts aimed at resolving the problem.

Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic): On 23 December 1994, the General Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution which affirmed its deep concern at the tremendous humanitarian problem caused by the presence of mines and at the fact that the number of mines being laid each year outweighs the number that could be cleared during the same period. In fact, approximately 100,000 land-mines were removed during the past year while between 2 and 5 million mines were newly laid. This world-wide crisis is not a static one; it grows very rapidly and alarmingly. In order to do away with this problem, mine-clearance appears to be of great importance. But mine clearance is dangerous and expensive and is being undertaken at a slow pace.

In this context, we should intensify our efforts and exert more of our energy to develop de-mining technologies that would improve the speed and the safety of de-mining without significantly increasing the cost. That being said, we concur with the opinion that mine clearance alone cannot solve the problem. Increased and concerted political efforts are needed to halt the further proliferation of land-mines. The question here is not why should we, but rather how can we stop the spread of these weapons.

Like many other countries, the Lao People's Democratic Republic is one of the unfortunate victims of the unexploded ordnance. During the war from 1964 to 1973, our country endured protracted and intense ground battles and some of the heaviest aerial bombing in world history. Ground battles, mainly in Houaphan, Xiengkhouang, Champassak and Attapeu provinces, left a staggering amount of unexploded ordnance such as

mortar shells, munitions and land-mines. The aerial bombing — 2 million tons — mainly in Houaphan and Xiengkhouang provinces and along almost the full length of our eastern border, consisted of anti-personnel cluster bombs, known in Laos as "bombies", that were designed to explode on or shortly after impact. But due to the fact that the ordnance was not dropped in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications, it was generally recognized that 30 per cent of these small bombs failed to explode.

Today, 20 years after the war ended, we still observe with pain that ordnance dropped from the air is the cause of the majority of injuries and deaths. For instance, in Xieng Khouang, according to a survey carried out by the Mines Advisory Group, a British non-governmental organization, 44 per cent of accident victims are children under 15 years of age. The same size as tennis balls, these "bombies" are obviously mistaken for playthings. This is a disturbing finding inasmuch as it affects our youth dreadfully. Our lack of data means that the bomblets, or "bombies", as we know them in our country, can be anywhere — indeed, everywhere — in the fields, on the hillsides, inside villages, along roads and in the centre of towns.

Since 1975, with the cooperation of and assistance from friendly countries, international organizations and non-governmental organizations, the Lao Government has done whatever it could to clear unexploded ordnance. Successes were recorded but to be honest, a lot — really a lot — remains to be done. Recently, on 1 August 1995, the Lao Government, in an effort to give a strong impulse to its clearance effort, together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), signed a trust fund for the clearance of unexploded ordnance.

The fund has the clear objective of providing special resources for a coherent programme of removing unexploded ordnance, community awareness, surveys and other, related initiatives. The clearance programme will be managed by a steering committee to be chaired by the Lao Government, with representatives from concerned ministries and provinces, as well as representatives from UNDP and UNICEF. Designated as the ministry responsible for coordination, overall management and monitoring of the clearance programme, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare is preparing a yearly work plan to serve as a guide to the clearance efforts and to determine which areas should be cleared as a priority. Contributions can be of two kinds: first, non-earmarked contributions, the use of which is determined by the steering committee, and, secondly, earmarked contributions, by which the donor can select a particular type of intervention, subject to approval by the steering committee. The fund will first focus its activities on making a rapid nation-wide assessment of the unexploded-ordnance problem. Total funding requirements will then be estimated and, with the funds available, we will start with priority areas to be established by the steering committee.

The task of making the Lao People's Democratic Republic ordnance-free seems daunting, but we wish here to emphasize that, unlike many other places, our country now enjoys peace and political stability, and land that is cleared will stay cleared. It is our hope that the international community will make contributions in cash or in kind with equipment, food aid and so on, to this fund so as to turn the aim of this undertaking into a reality.

Mr. Amer (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The international meeting held in July 1995 highlighted the extent of the United Nations interest in the problem of mines. It would be remiss of me not to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for having taken the initiative to convene that conference as part of the overall effort by the United Nations to increase international awareness of the gravity of the problems of mines and their various implications. It is gratifying to note that participation in the conference was extensive, whether by Governments, intergovernmental or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This simply showed that the international community as a whole attaches great importance to mine problems that beset many countries.

In his report contained in document A/50/408, the Secretary-General presents us with a comprehensive account of the activities of the United Nations in the field of assistance in mine clearance, including that provided by the Organization to countries which suffer from this problem. It is noticeable that the report focused on countries which suffer directly from the problem of mines as a result of internal conflicts. We do not object to this, but we believe that the report could have been more comprehensive had it drawn the attention of the international community to other countries which face the same problems, albeit for different reasons. In so saying, I refer to countries that have been suffering from the consequence of the planting of mines in their territories a long time ago. The Secretary-General himself did refer to this when he stated in "An Agenda for Peace" that:

> "peace building ... must address the serious problem of land-mines, many tens of millions of which remain scattered in present or former combat zones". (*A/47/277, para. 58*)

The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya is one of the countries affected by the phenomenon of old mines. Libya's sufferings from this problem started with the eruption of the Second World War, during which our territory was the theatre of many operations by the combatants. Those operations included the planting of various types of mines and booby traps in vast areas of our land. A study prepared by a United Nations panel of experts and published in document A/38/383 said that in the course of the many Second World War campaigns in North Africa, the allied and axis forces planted millions of explosive devices, mostly mines. The study confirmed that the number of those explosive devices is estimated to be between 5 and 19 million. It is regrettable that the forces of the axis powers and the legions of the allies left those war remnants behind them, without leaving any marks or maps that could indicate their locations. This has aggravated the deadly effects of those mines which, to date, have killed thousands of people. Moreover, the existence in our soil of those devices has impeded efforts at combating desertification and expanding agricultural development. This has been borne out by many studies, including the study carried out by OXFAM which stated that "27 per cent of Libya's agricultural land, which is limited in the first place, cannot be exploited because of mines".

Another study carried out by a group of experts (A/49/357/Add.1) gave a glimpse of the losses suffered by Libya and emphasized that 5,670 people have been killed and 4,953 permanently injured by mines, in addition to the loss of 11,900 head of cattle killed by mines. This information is consonant with the findings of another study carried out by a wide-circulation newspaper, namely that "mines planted in Libya since World War II have, up to 1983, killed 4,000 persons and more than 12,000 heads of livestock".

Libya has faced and continues to face many problems as a result of the existence in its soil of these mines. Agricultural production increased without clearance of the mines. Road and railway building has been made difficult because mines are scattered everywhere. We have tried to cope with these problems, and many plans have been formulated for that purpose. However our success has been limited. The conclusion we have arrived at is that coping with the problems of mines with our domestic capabilities alone is extremely difficult because the extensive areas of the minefields, the paucity of technical expertise in this area and the lack of information on the types of mines and of maps of the minefields. Consequently, my country welcomes assistance by the United Nations in ridding our soil of these mines.

It should be noted, however, that any assistance provided by the United Nations in this respect is no substitute for the responsibility by the countries that planted mines in the first place to clear those minefields themselves and to pay compensation for the damage the mines have caused. This principle has been established by several international and regional forums, including this Assembly in its resolutions 35/71, 36/188, 37/215, 38/162 and 39/167, all of which confirm that responsibility for clearing the remnants of war, including mines, rests with the countries that planted them. Those countries should provide the necessary information and technical assistance for the removal of the mines, should pay compensation for the losses incurred and should bear the cost of clearance and destruction of the mines.

My country attaches great importance to the full implementation of the resolutions of the international community on the remnants of war. We in Libya do not deny that some of the countries responsible for planting the mines in our land have provided us with some partial information, but that information is not sufficient. The clearance of the huge number of mines in Libyan territory cannot be undertaken with the help of a few maps, such as those provided by the German and Italian Governments. That is why we have to appeal, once again, as we have done on previous occasions, to all the countries responsible for planting those mines in our territory to provide us with information on their types and on where and how they were planted. Those countries should also provide us with the advanced technology required for the detection and removal of mines and with accurate inventories of those mines, including the length of each mine field.

Libya had nothing to do with the circumstance that led to the outbreak of the Second World War and should not continue to suffer the tragic consequences of that war. The countries that waged that war and brought it to our territory are responsible for the problems we face today as a result of their war and must assume responsibility for their actions. This requires full implementation by those countries of the outstanding stipulations of the General Assembly's resolutions on war remnants, especially those relating to appropriate compensation. We and others would welcome a positive

response, but any attempt to shirk this responsibility will not release these countries from their duty. There is no statute of limitation on such responsibilities and the countries concerned will continue to be held liable so long as innocent citizens continue to suffer or die as a result of their mines.

In our statement on this item at the last session, we welcomed the United Nations efforts in the field of mine clearance. Today, we should like to renew our support for that role, including the initiative aimed at setting up a Central Land-mine Database and the expansion of the provision of technical assistance in the area of mine clearance. Proceeding from our awareness of the extent of the United Nations need for resources, my country has contributed to the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance. Lastly, the Geneva Meeting was an opportunity for creating closer relations between the countries concerned with this problem. Therefore, we support the proposal to convene, in the next two years, a meeting to strengthen those relations further and to follow up the results of the first Geneva Meeting on the provision of assistance in mine clearance.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item for this meeting.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I should like to inform members that the General Assembly will take up agenda item 38, entitled "The situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti", tomorrow morning as the fourth item in order to take action on draft resolution A/50/L.53.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.